

OIF reconfirms Marines as ‘force in readiness’

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Standing before the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 12, 2002, President George W. Bush took what would be the first step towards war, stating, “The conduct of the Iraqi regime is a threat to the authority of the United Nations, and a threat to peace.” He then asked for the UN to support a war in Iraq, adding that the U.S. planned to attack with or without approval.

“We cannot stand idly by and do nothing while dangers gather,” he said. “Iraq has answered a decade of U.S. demands with a decade of defiance.”

As the president’s call to arms echoed throughout the country, service members began to face the reality of the second major military operation in less than a year.

On Oct. 2, 2002, House Joint Resolution 114, “Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Iraq” was introduced to the House of Representatives. Its approval eight days later by a vote of 296-133 prompted Marines everywhere to lace up their



Sixty-seven percent of the Marine Corps’ operating forces were deployed to Iraq in January. Today, nearly 130,000 American troops remain in Iraq, more than five months since President George W. Bush declared the end of major combat operations.

boots and stand by to deploy.

Nearly five months later, the massive build up of U.S. Joint Forces gathered in the areas surrounding Kuwait were still awaiting the order to attack. On March 19, as President Bush’s 48-hour ultimatum for Saddam Hussein’s family to

leave the country passed, a rain of Tomahawk cruise missiles and bombs began obliterating targets throughout Iraq’s capital city of Baghdad. Barrages of artillery against various targets continued providing cover as U.S. and British forces stacked anxiously on

Iraq’s southern border.

Over the years, the Marines have developed a reputation as a force in readiness able to deploy at a moment’s notice for varying purposes with precision and accuracy. This doctrine was further demonstrated during OIF, according to Maj. Eric R. Junger, operations officer, Depot G-3, who deployed to Iraq as the Plans Officer for Marine Forces Pacific/Marine Forces Central Command, Camp Smith, Hawaii.

“The capability of the Navy Marine Corps Team was demonstrated by our ability to deploy expeditiously and support ourselves,” said Junger. “We deployed more Marines and equipment faster than ever before.”

Marines were ready for deployment so fast that the ground attack was ordered a day earlier than initially scheduled to protect oil fields U.S. forces feared would be sabotaged by Iraqi forces.

U.S. forces deployed not only faster, but farther inland than ever before, said Col. Kevin L. Kelley, commanding officer, Recruit Training Regiment.

“The [Marine Corps’] concepts were validated again and enabled the Marine

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